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THE LABOUR MONTHLY

A MAGAZINE OF INTERNATIONAL LABOUR

Editor: R. PALME DUTT

Volume 14 December, 1932 Number 12

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R. P. D.

The Communist Party Congress
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Preparing Strike Action on the Railways
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Index to Volume XIV.

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NOTES OF THE MONTH

Communist Congress—Labour Conference—Rôle of Communist Congress—Situation—Meaning of "End of Stabilisation"—Future of the Crisis—Preparation for Revolutionary Issues—No Peaceful Solution of the Crisis—Strategic Conclusion—Revolutionary Significance of Present Mass Struggle—Capitalist Anxieties—Problems of the Mass Struggle—Unemployed and Employed Workers—The United Front

THE results of the Twelfth Congress of the Communist Party, which was held in Battersea last month, are of concern, not only to the immediate members and supporters of the Communist Party, but to the whole working class. The issues dealt with were not simply the special problems of one section or party inside the working class, but the common problems of the whole working-class struggle at the present stage, viewed from the standpoint of the working-class revolution, that is, of the permanent interests of the working class as a whole. The kind of issues discussed were: the crisis and the workers' answer; the capitalist offensive; the strike movement and rising mass struggle, its lessons and problems; the fight against unemployment and the National Government's economy campaign; the war question; the rising left movements in the trade unions and among I.L.P. workers; the united working-class front. All these questions were discussed both theoretically, in relation to the general understanding of the situation and the line ahead; and practically, that is, the most careful, concrete exact conclusions were reached as to the next steps to be taken by the militant workers in order to advance. It will be seen that a conference of workers' delegates, all fresh from direct participation in the struggle, discussing these issues, is a very different kind of conference from the ordinary traditional party conference in this country, only concerned to prepare an electioneering

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programme. The Communist Congress is the only workers' congress in this country which deals with the problems of the working-class struggle as a whole, which faces all the questions raised by the struggle, and points the way forward. For this reason, the results of the Congress should be carefully studied by all workers, including in the Independent Labour Party, in the Labour Party and in the trade unions, who wish to discuss and clear further the path forward in the present critical stage.

CONTRAST the Labour Party Conference and Trades Union Congress in order to see the basic difference of aim and approach. These were both in form workers' conferences, nominally representing very much wider bodies of workers, two millions in the case of the Labour Party, three millions in the case of the Trades Union Congress. But did they concern themselves with the problems facing the workers? With the attacks of capitalism on every front, and how to defeat them? With the strike movement? With the struggles of the unemployed? With the mobilising and uniting of the workers for the fight? Nothing of the kind. The devotion of a fraction of a session to one or two easy gestures, such as a formal vote of "protest" against one particular police charge, or the transparent manœuvre of the cotton strike fund, constituted the total attention accorded by these leading bodies to the problems of the workers' struggle—at the same time as the actual policy, and the refusal to receive the unemployed marchers, showed their real relation to the struggle and their identity with the line of the National Government. What was the main concern and activity of these conferences? The main concern was the preparation of paper "programmes" without end—programmes for the more efficient organisation of capitalist industry, for the reorganisation of banking, for public boards of control, even for so-called "nationalisation" within the capitalist state, &c.—all bearing this character of paper programmes without any relation whatever to the workers' struggle and urgent present issues. Here we see the full tradition of capitalist parliamentarism: the oblivion

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to all realities of existing struggles, and hypnotising of attention on to a long set of promises for the future to be dangled before the electorate. "Elect us," runs the refrain of every capitalist party, Conservative, Liberal, or Labour, "and we shall do this, that, and the other for you." The task of the party conference becomes to prepare the most plausible programme of promises for the electors.

THE character and work of the Communist Party is in complete contrast to this. The Communist Party does not come forward with promises, in order to ask for power in return for its promises. For the Communist Party, it is the workers themselves alone who can free themselves, who must win power; and the rôle of the Communist Party is only as a part of this common struggle of all the workers, leading the way, fighting in the forefront, organising the struggle, showing the way of advance. The Communists, as Marx said long ago, "have no interests apart from those of the working class as a whole." What makes the distinctive character of their lead in the general struggle is, first, its international character: "in the various national struggles of the proletariat, they express and champion the interests of the proletariat as a whole, independently of nationality"; and, second, its deeper class character, over-riding all sectional interests: "in the various stages of development which the struggle of the working class against the bourgeoisie has to pass through, they always and everywhere represent the interests of the movement as whole." Or, expressing the same conception in another form, they unite the present struggle with the *future* of the Movement: "the Communists fight on behalf of the immediate aims and interests of the working class, but in the present movement they are also defending the future of that movement." These may sound very simple, familiar elementary truths; but they are at the heart of a correct understanding of the work of the Congress. *It is just in the power to unite the present struggles with the future of the movement, with the working-class revolution and the approaching*

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revolutionary struggles, that lies the heart of the lead of the present Congress. The Congress faced in close and concrete form all the manifold issues and problems confronting the workers at the present stage, faced the smallest practical details of the mobilising and organising work that must be achieved; but at the same time every part of this work was in organic relation to a central line and understanding of the whole situation, of the development of the workers' struggle and of the path of advance of the workers' revolution. The first necessity, in order to grasp firmly the results of the Congress, is to grasp firmly this central line and understanding of the situation and of the consequent line of the workers' struggle.

WHAT was the view of the situation reached by the Congress? Here the work runs closely with that of the preceding international meeting, the Twelfth Plenum of the International Executive, which drew the balance of the situation on the world scale. It is self-evident to every one that during the past year or fifteen months, roughly since the collapse of the Labour Government, formation of the National Government, collapse of sterling, Japanese invasion of Manchuria, &c., we have been entering into a new and far sharper stage of the crisis, with far more rapid development of events. Up to 1931 the crisis, despite its gigantic scale, still bore on the surface so far resemblance to the typical recurrent crisis of pre-war capitalism that it could be widely treated, as was done by social democracy, as simply a large-scale example of the cyclical crisis of capitalism; and alone the Communists, who also alone had predicted it, insisted from the first on its distinct character as a special crisis developing in the midst of the general crisis of capitalism (the break-up since 1914). The events of 1931 have overwhelmingly confirmed the correctness of this. It is only necessary to consider such developments as the collapse of the Young Plan and whole reparations system, the collapse of the gold standard in the majority of countries, the war in the Far East,

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the dictatorship in Germany, and rising mass struggles, to see the new type of period into which we are entering in consequence of the crisis. The Twelfth Plenum designated what has happened as the end of capitalist stabilisation.

IT is necessary to understand this conception of the end of stabilisation quite sharply and exactly, and not as a phrase or rhetorical flourish. It means that the main pillars on which the partial stabilisation of capitalism was built up in the post-war period, and especially between 1924 and 1928, have now broken down, *i.e.*, the restoration of the gold standard and stable exchange, the Dawes and Young Plans, Washington, Versailles, reconstruction on the basis of the American creditor, re-establishment of production and trade up to the pre-war level and beyond it, &c. The Sixth Congress in 1928, already noted the completion of this second period of post-war capitalism, or process of reconstruction, and opening of the third period in which capitalism, having reached to a higher level of productive forces and production than before the war (except in Britain, where the decay has, without interruption, been more advanced and extreme), was driving to increased contradictions and new and greater crisis. The Tenth Plenum in the summer of 1929 declared that this new world economic crisis was now about to break out, and would start from America, following the frenzy of speculation then in progress there, and spread over the world. The Eleventh Plenum in the spring of 1931 declared that the world economic crisis, which had then raged for a year-and-a-half, was undermining the basis of capitalist stabilisation, that "capitalist stabilisation is coming to an end," that the basic contradiction of declining capitalism and ascending socialism in the Soviet Union was now the forefront of the world situation, and that the effects of the economic crisis were showing themselves more and more in political forms, in political reaction and the advance to fascism, in imperialist contradictions and the advance to war, and in the rising class struggle. To-day this process has reached the point at which the Twelfth

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Plenum is able to lay down as a completed fact " the end of capitalist stabilisation."

THIS is, however, only one side of the picture. The conception of the end of stabilisation, taken by itself, has still only reference to the past. What is important is the conclusion for the future. Where does the crisis lead ? Where will it end ? This question is on the lips of all, becoming ever more insistent, as all the ordinary prophecies of recovery are successively falsified, and the universal suffering grows. Does it lead to the final collapse of capitalism, as the left Social-Democrats (I.L.P.) argue, looking only to an automatic economic collapse, and leaving out of account the decisive question of the active rôle of the proletariat, which alone can finally overthrow capitalism ? Or does it lead to gradual overcoming of the crisis, once the dead point or bottom has been reached, and renewed upward movement, after the model of the pre-war commercial crises—as all the bourgeois economists and politicians, including their Labour followers, calculate and hope, hailing every little sign, every fluctuation of production and trade, as the " beginning of the end " and the " harbinger of recovery " ? To this question the Twelfth Plenum has given an explicit answer, the argument of which it is very important to note exactly.

THE end of stabilisation does not yet mean that we are in a direct revolutionary situation. The objective conditions for this are rapidly developing. But this requires also the subjective readiness of the working class ; and the influence of social-democracy and of the social democratic trade union leadership, reflecting the still surviving reformist-democratic-parliamentary traditions and illusions, is still strong and able to hold back the mass of the workers, especially of the decisive sections of the organised, employed workers. This influence is visibly weakening and being undermined by the exposure of the crisis ; in Germany, where the stage is most advanced, the Communist Party has already,

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as shown at the last elections, out-numbered the Social-Democrats in the most important industrial regions, in Berlin, the Ruhr, and the Rhineland industrial towns, and is well on the way to leading the majority of the working class; and, although this is an extreme stage of advance, in all countries the process of revolutionisation is going forward. We are still in the preparatory stage preceding the direct revolutionary crisis, but with diminishing time and with increasing pressure of the situation. The urgency of hastening forward this development of carrying forward the present partial struggles to wider and wider struggles, and to conscious struggle against the whole régime and for the workers' answer to the crisis, is obvious in view of the extremely rapid development of the crisis.

BUT the fact that we are not yet in the direct revolutionary crisis, that we are still in the critical preparatory stage, does not mean that capitalism can hope to achieve a peaceful solution of the crisis and gradual renewal of normal conditions. On the contrary. The character of the crisis in the present stage of capitalist decay has shown that it cannot be measured by the old standards and forms of the pre-war crisis, and that it cannot look to any "normal" outcome of the old type. The old type of crisis found its solution, first through the wholesale destruction and weeding out of smaller concerns and consequent extension of the field for the surviving larger ones—a species of unconscious natural rationalisation; and second, through the opening out of new untouched or incompletely opened regions of the world to capitalist penetration. To-day, both these processes find themselves blocked. Monopoly capitalism has reached such an extreme point that the surviving giants can no longer save themselves by devouring their smaller competitors (artificial, conscious rationalisation had already been widely carried through before the crisis); the number of bankruptcies is more limited; the giant trusts maintain themselves with state aid, maintain a relatively high level of profits and dividends in a dwindling

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market, on a basis of restricted production with artificially-protected markets through a network of tariffs, prohibitions, licences, bounties, subsidies, &c.—and the crisis is thus prolonged. At the same time the division of the world by capitalism, outside the Soviet Union, is already complete; the Chinese national struggle resists further penetration; the conquest of new markets can only be attained by one or another imperialist group through large-scale violence and explosions, by war between the imperialist powers for the new division of the world, by war on China, by war on the Soviet Union. The growing conflicts of the Imperialist Powers, especially Britain and America, consequent on the crisis, repeatedly check the attempts at a rational harmonious solution of the problems confronting them. Alongside of this, the contradiction between the enormous productive forces and the poverty of the masses is now so great as to admit of no scope for a peaceful revival of production within capitalist conditions of property ownership. Thus all the conditions point with absolute certainty to one conclusion. *There can be no peaceful, purely economic, solution of the crisis. The crisis drives to a violent outcome.* The social and political contradictions, the mass struggle, raised to ever-greater heights by the consequences of the crisis, drive in the direction of revolution. The rising antagonisms of the imperialist powers, in the desperate fight for markets, for domination, for the new division of the world, drive to war. Thus the Twelfth Plenum characterised the present period the situation of the end of capitalist stabilisation, as a period of *transition*, of " transition to a new cycle of wars and revolutions."

WHAT is the *strategic conclusion* of this analysis—that is to say, the practical conclusion of the necessary line to guide the activity of the working class in the present period in such a way as to carry it forward to the next? This is the decisively important question. The answer to this question depends on the analysis of the transitional or preparatory character of the present stage of the

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crisis as leading, through growing conflicts, through sharp turns and explosions, to a new series of wars and revolutions. This means that *the present partial struggles, the developing mass struggle, take on a new and vital significance* in relation to the present stage of the crisis. They are, even in respect of the smallest struggle, *preparation* for the coming revolutionary issues and conflicts, and must be viewed as such. Through them the widest masses of workers must be won to the fighting front, and must be awakened to the political issues. The working class is gathering its forces, is requiring to mobilise all its forces ; the sections of workers not yet active must be drawn into the struggle, even at the outset on the most elementary limited and sectional issues ; and at the same time, through this elementary struggle, and alongside of it, revolutionary political consciousness must be developed for the coming fight. From this follows the twofold character of the lead of the Twelfth Plenum and of the Party Congress in Britain. The situation is seen as driving to revolutionary issues. But for this very reason the most intensive detailed mass work, organisation and development of partial struggles and linking of the revolutionary advance-guard with the widest masses of workers, becomes more than ever important. At the same time this intensified mass work, and concentration on the detail day-to-day propaganda and organisation in the unions and factories, must go forward ; and at the same time, in close unity with this, intensified revolutionary propaganda and response to the basic issues of the crisis, not merely reflecting, but going beyond and drawing forward the awakening general discontent of the masses over the crisis, and carrying it forward to political revolutionary consciousness and fight. Either process without the other loses its meaning and defeats its purpose.

IT is in this perspective that the revolutionary significance of the present developing mass struggle in Britain stands clear. At the present stage the smallest strike is no longer solely economic in character. Every demand, however limited,

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every resistance to a wage-cut or to dismissals, every demand for unemployed relief, inevitably comes up against all the issues of the crisis, takes on the character of a struggle against the crisis and the capitalist way out, of a struggle, not only against the particular employer or local authority, but against the whole state and the capitalist régime. This already becomes increasingly visible in concrete form in the new character of the struggles ; in Lancashire, with the mass character of the fight, and with the wholesale drafting in of mounted police ; in the unemployed Hunger March and mass demonstrations and conflicts with the police. The readiness of the workers to struggle, in spite of all the economic arguments of defeatism of the Labour leadership, bears already the first beginnings of a revolutionary character, of a challenge to the crisis and to the capitalist régime. The consciousness of the workers is awakening to the issues of the crisis. Our task is, through these partial struggles, to develop this consciousness and to develop the organisation of the workers. The field is open, as never before, to revolutionary leadership, which is able to get close to the concrete issues of the immediate struggle, and at the same time to answer the basic questions of the crisis and to show the revolutionary path of advance.

THE rulers of finance-capital in Britain are strongly conscious of this revolutionary significance of the partial struggles at the present stage. This is the underlying meaning of the famous pessimist speech of the Governor of the Bank of England, Montagu Norman, at the Bankers' Dinner at the Mansion House on October 20. His words have been widely quoted as evidence of the pessimism, of the sense of impotence and bankruptcy of capitalism in the present crisis. But there is more than that ; and it is worth noting his words exactly, and the circumstances in which they were spoken, to get their force. He said (*Daily Telegraph* report, October 21, 1932) :

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> In spite of every attempt that has been made—mostly in isolation to a large extent—the vast forces of the world, the herd instinct, the desperation of the people who have neither work nor market, have brought about a series of events and a general tendency which appear to me at the present time to be outside the control of any man, of any Government of any country. . . .
>
> I will admit that for the moment the way to me is not clear.

"The desperation of the people who have neither work nor market." This is the basis of this utterance of despair. Note well the circumstances in which they were spoken. The speech was delivered on October 20. On October 11–12 had taken place the Belfast fighting and shootings. On October 15 the Belfast authorities had granted the increased relief scales. On October 18 had taken place the demonstration and fighting round the London County Hall (and on the same day Henderson had resigned the leadership of the Labour Party, in order to facilitate the manœuvres of the Labour Party to play a "left" rôle). The line stands out clear. *Behind the pessimism of Montagu Norman, of the capitalist rulers, is the rising mass struggle.* They know that every struggle in the present crisis, in the present extreme stage of capitalist decay and disequilibrium, shatters further the whole structure, defeats every capitalist policy, and at the same time increases the confidence of the workers and their refusal to accept any longer the burdens of the capitalist crisis as inevitable. But this same knowledge can give the workers the greater confidence to go forward with the present struggles as already the preparation of the future revolutionary battles.

THE problems of the present rising mass struggle, its strength and weaknesses as so far developed, and the necessary path of advance, are thus the decisive practical problems confronting the working class and that constituted the principal subject of discussion of the Communist Congress. The developments of this year have shown a powerful rising strike movement, of which Lancashire has been the outstanding example, with many new features in the forms and

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character of the struggle; and a powerful agitation of the unemployed, with mass demonstrations and conflicts reaching a stage not previously touched in this country. What were the principal weaknesses of the movement as so far developed? We may note several. The revolutionary forces are still very small and isolated; and the mass-response to the conflict, the element of mass-spontaneity, far outstripped the leadership and organisation (experience of the London mass demonstrations). The strike movement still revealed the power of the trade union bureaucracy to break it, conspicuously both in the case of the weavers and the spinners. Behind this lies revealed a still further and basic weakness of the revolutionary movement in this country at present; that it has still only touched the fringes of the employed workers in the main industries, and especially of the trade union organised workers, the mass of whom, despite growing discontent, still remain within the control of the reformist trade union leadership, and have not yet confidence in alternative methods and leadership.

CAPITALISM seeks to use the conditions of the crisis to drive a barrier between the employed and the unemployed workers, and to use this division as one of its principal pillars of support at the present stage. The fight over unemployment tends to become a fight of the unemployed, with only limited organised participation of the employed workers. The revolutionary workers, themselves in a heavy proportion unemployed, find easier response among the unemployed workers, or in general propaganda, and tend to neglect the heavier, stubborn, vitally indispensable work, through the unions and the factories, to win the decisive sections of the organised employed workers against the reformist leadership. But without the basic work in the unions and in the factories the line of independent struggle and independent strike leadership becomes empty; and the effective control remains in the hands of the reformist leadership. Thus the Congress was brought to the root question of practical work in front: the necessity to strengthen

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agitation, propaganda and organisation in the unions and in the factories, to develop every movement of struggle, every opposition movement, against capitalism and against the reformist trade union leadership, as the necessary condition of the further effective advance of the mass struggle.

WHAT is now the need ? The need is to develop a powerful common front of struggle against the capitalist offensive, against the employers' attack and the National Government attack, and against the war-preparations of capitalism. Every present particular struggle, in which the workers combine their action for their immediate demands, every strike, every demonstration and campaign, every movement of opposition within the working-class organisations, is already a first step towards this united front. But these are only a beginning. More is needed. These local, partial and sectional struggles need to be developed and strengthened to bring out the consciousness of the common struggle, of the common issues, economic and also political, of the struggle, to draw in wider and wider masses of workers, to throw up new forces of leadership, and thus to lead the way forward to a powerful nation-wide united front movement of struggle against the National Government. In the words of the Congress main resolution :

> The united front of struggle embracing the widest masses of the workers in the factories and trade unions, and including the working women and housewives, must be organised to successfully carry through the fight.
>
> (1) Against the capitalist offensive led by the National Government and actively supported by the policy of the reformist trade union leaders on the wages of the workers, and unemployment and health insurance benefits, provision of work schemes for the unemployed, the Means Test, rationalisation, against any restriction on existing social services, high prices through tariffs and inflation, for freedom to strike, and against all anti-labour legislation now being used to try and smash the increasing militant resistance of the workers.
>
> (2) Against the National Government's war preparations, and its active co-operation with other imperialist powers for armed

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intervention against the Soviet Union, and particularly its policy of supporting and encouraging the anti-Soviet aims of the Japanese and French imperialists; mass mobilisation against the breaking of the trade agreement with the Soviet Union. . .To systematically expose, especially in the factories and trade unions, the active support of the war policy of the National Government by the reformist leaders under the cover of pacifist phrases, and even verbal defence of the Soviet Union.

(3) For the withdrawal of all armed forces from the colonial countries, for the full independence of the colonies, with the right of separation from the British Empire.

This is the decisive lead of the Congress for the immediate struggle in front.

R. P. D.

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THE COMMUNIST PARTY CONGRESS

By WILLIAM RUST

THE 12th Congress of the Communist Party of Great Britain which met in London on November 12–15, was strongly influenced by the big events now taking place in Britain, and the rising revolutionary spirit of the working class. The Congress aimed to give an answer to the urgent questions which are now confronting the workers in this historical period of the end of capitalist stabilisation.

Where is Britain going? The capitalists are making a concerted attempt to drive the workers down to mass pauperisation. All sections of the working class are being attacked: shortly before the Congress opened the Government announced the report of the Royal Commission on Unemployment Insurance which means a vast extension of the Means Test, the capitalist principle that the employed must keep the unemployed.

The economic crisis is rapidly deepening. "The trade of the country is still in an appalling condition," says Baldwin. "On the whole the great staple industries of Great Britain were now passing through misfortune deeper than ever in their history," adds Runciman.

Prophecies of returning prosperity are still frequently made, but the capitalists are unable to conceal that the complete transformation of Britain from a free trade to a tariff country has brought neither improvement in trade nor better conditions for the workers, but a sharpening of the antagonisms between all imperialist countries, a further choking up of the channels of international trade and higher prices at home.

The main resolution of the Congress declared:

> In Britain, the oldest capitalist country in the world, the end of capitalist stabilisation has been reached. Millions of unemployed are without hope of finding work again under capitalism; millions of employed workers suffer from wage cuts, tariffs, rationalisation and reduced social services.
>
> In Britain, the land of so-called parliamentary democracy, the National Government of the capitalists resorts to police terror and armoured cars, develop more and more terrorist measures against the workers.
>
> In the sharpest contradiction to the position in this oldest capitalist country in the world is the situation in the young Soviet Union, where the working class, led by the Communist Party, have taken the power out of the hands of the capitalists and established the dictatorship of the working class, building up Socialism.

There is no mistaking where capitalist Britain is going. Neither can there be any illusions regarding the results of Labour Party policy. The

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Labour Governments have left the workers in a far worse position than they were before. Two of the biggest strikes of recent years, the cotton weavers and spinners, have been deliberately betrayed by the reformist leaders. Significantly enough these leaders are more than ever ready with words of Socialism, and fancy schemes for the reorganisation of capitalism; but these they use only in order the more effectively to betray the daily fight of the workers and to prevent the building up of working class strength, the only power that can smash capitalism and build a Socialist society.

The Communist Congress clearly showed the difference between this reformist line and the revolutionary line, and the vivid contrast between the two worlds—decaying capitalism and living Socialism. In a stirring manifesto it summoned the workers to action against the capitalist offensive and for the revolutionary way out of the crisis.

But the problem before the Congress was not only to secure clarity on the present situation, but above all, to decide how the revolutionary policy could be carried into life, how a majority of the working class could be broken away from the influence of the capitalists and reformists and won for conscious revolutionary struggle.

In short, this Congress of the Communist Party was faced with the paramount task of making a real turn to mass work. Three years had gone by since the 11th Congress at Leeds, where the main question was the clear laying down of the line of independent working class struggle and the removal of opportunist elements in the leadership of the Party who were holding back its development. But since then it must be frankly admitted that the fight against opportunism had not gone hand in hand with untiring activity amongst the workers in the factories, trade unions and streets.

The Party remained largely isolated from the workers, and as a result of this isolation, what should have been a living policy was often turned into a formula and there were frequent vacillations in policy which did not help the Party to win the confidence and respect of the workers.

It is clear, however, that during the last three years much has been attempted and carried out. The *Daily Worker* has been published, despite almost insuperable obstacles. In the great strikes of the Yorkshire woollen workers and South Wales miners, in the fight against imperialist war in the Far East, and the struggle to defend the Soviet Union, the Party made great efforts to strengthen the struggle of the working class. During the recent Lancashire textile strikes the Party did really break through its isolation and conducted a tremendous amount of work.

But in connection with most of these struggles lasting results in the form of permanent influence in the factories and trade unions and the

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overcoming of reformist ideology, were not considerable. And this was mainly because the Party joined in spontaneous movements of the masses, giving assistance where it could, but because of its general isolation was unable actively to prepare the struggle and achieve decisive successes in defeating the paralysing capitalist and reformist ideology which has been inculcated into the minds of the workers.

These experiences show how hopeless it is to rely upon spontaneous forms of struggle as a means of advancing to Socialism: they reveal the power of the reformist machine and capitalist state apparatus in driving back the revolts of the workers. Look how the weavers were driven back under slave terms despite their desire to fight on. Every struggle, small and large, must be developed under revolutionary leadership, planned and painstaking activity must be carried on in order to spread a revolutionary consciousness amongst the workers.

Therefore the Congress, self-critically laying bare the chief weakness of the Party, puts its main emphasis on the necessity for the turn to mass work and declared that:

> The Party cannot transform itself into a mass Party without overcoming this sectarianism; narrow approach to the workers, in the trade unions, in the Labour Party, in the factories, &c., sectarian narrow approach to the struggles of the workers and to the forms and methods of these struggles. This sectarianism and isolation from the masses, in spite of their response to revolutionary struggles, is the basis both in the main right danger, and "leftism."

The Congress discussions which lasted for four days, showed that the delegates were really determined to learn from the masses and that the January resolution of the Central Committee, drawn up as a result of the thorough-going discussions on the lessons of last year's crisis, was actually being carried out. Since January there has been a real improvement in the mass work of the Party and passivity is being resolutely attacked.

A signal feature of the Congress discussion was the close detailed attention given to experiences in the factories and trade unions. The Congress recognised that the greatest defect in the past work of the Party has been the neglect of work in the reformist trade unions. Examples of successes attending the recommencement of this work of building up a revolutionary trade union opposition showed very clearly what tremendous possibilities there are for influencing the trade unionists, strengthening their fight against the reformist leaders, and transforming the trade union branches into organs of class struggle, so that it would be possible for the branches to play an important part in the organising of workers' resistance in the factories to the starvation capitalist offensive.

All reports on successes in the trade unions, factories and amongst the unemployed were greeted with enthusiasm and applause at the

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Congress. One docker comrade from the Port Workers Unity Movement, made a powerful impression on the Congress when he recounted in simple working class language how they had succeeded in enrolling 530 members in this movement, and winning improvements in conditions, which the Union bureaucrats had declared to be impossible.

In replying to the discussion, Comrade Harry Pollitt, who showed the inspiring revolutionary perspectives now opening up, strongly emphasised the importance of this detailed every-day work and, in fact, devoted a considerable portion of his reply to practical proposals on how to develop the struggle, especially the mighty fight of the railwaymen against the demand of the Companies.

In the words of the 12th Plenum of the Executive Committee of the Communist International:

> Precisely because little time remains before the revolutionary crisis matures, it is necessary, without losing a moment, to *intensify and accelerate our Bolshevik mass work*, to winning over the majority of the working class, and to heighten the revolutionary activity of the working class.

Revolutionary mass work! This was the slogan of the Congress, and every Communist understood by this that the daily activity, no matter how small and insignificant it may seem, must be part of the work for leading forward to the goal of revolution.

An end must be made to that boasted English practicability and contempt of theory to which Lenin referred, a practicability which is really a means of denying the new developments that are taking place and keeping the eyes of the masses on the present system of society as the only possible system. The English capitalists, their intellectuals and the reformist leaders, endeavour by all means to cover up the great mass ferment which shows the spread of new ideas, the strivings of the masses towards Socialist society. They endeavour to cover up the bankruptcy of capitalism, and to dope the masses with their schemes and proposals all of which are based on the continuation of private ownership.

The tasks of a revolutionist is to be able to generalise from every event, and to show how all the activities of the masses can be gathered in one great common stream, flowing towards Socialism.

Speaker after speaker at the Congress pointed to the events in Belfast and Birkenhead as vivid demonstrations of the revolutionary spirit of the working class. The textile strike and the historic Hunger March on London were acclaimed as evidence of the growing realisation amongst the workers that the present order must be fought against and destroyed. The Congress did not draw this lesson only from the big outstanding events, it pointed to the need for a clear revolutionary propaganda in connection with every struggle.

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The speakers showed that even the smallest fight must be made a means of advancing revolutionary understanding. For example, in a railway canteen the workers had grumbled for a very long time against a broken window, which was the cause of inconvenient drafts. Communist workers took up this grievance; the window was finally replaced after lengthy objections on the part of the management, who declared that as working class children were responsible for the broken window, the workers, therefore, should pay for it.

Only by taking up such issues can the revolutionary workers prove themselves in the eyes of the masses, lay the basis for wider solidarity on the bigger fights, and develop independent leadership and organisation in uncompromising opposition to the reformist leaders. On the basis of such a small incident as this the class lesson can be driven home. The arguments are obvious. Working class children are compelled to play in the streets whilst the children of the bourgeoisie receive every care and protection. If the workers have to fight so hard merely in order to get a window replaced, it is clear that great class strength and solidarity will be needed in order to defend wages, and, finally, to end the despotic power of the capitalists and to establish workers' ownership and control.

In the light of this discussion, the Congress emphasised that the turn to revolutionary mass work meant essentially an offensive against reformism, a determined fight for independent revolutionary leadership and against the policy of collaboration which means defeat and demoralisation, concentration on the struggle for strengthening the power of the working class so that it would be able to impose its will on the capitalists.

It was in this spirit that the Congress discussed the relations of the Communist Party to the I.L.P., on the one hand recognising the need for a stronger fight against reformist ideology, and on the other clearly recognising the growing militancy of the rank-and-file of the I.L.P. as part of the increasing revolutionary spirit of the working class.

Therefore, the Congress made a special appeal to the I.L.P. members to join with the Communists in the united front struggle against the capitalist offensive and called for the comradely discussion with the I.L.P. workers, so that the question of how to achieve working class power could be frankly faced and discussed in all aspects, both from the standpoint of revolutionary principles and immediate practical tasks.

The Congress was firmly of the opinion that this forward development of the working class in the fight against capitalism could only be carried out if persistent and devoted efforts were made to bring forward and train new leaders equal to the great historic task now confronting the workers.

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The importance of the fight against the aggressive war-like policy of the National Government was strongly underlined by the Congress. The denunciation of the Anglo-Soviet trade agreement was pointed to as an example of growing hostile attitude of the " National " Government. Alongside this preparations for intervention against the Soviet Union and the growing antagonism between Britain and America, goes the sharpening of the National Government's offensive against the colonial masses. Therefore, the Congress showed how necessary it is for the Party to develop its direct daily fight against war, and to struggle unitedly with the revolutionary movement in the colonies.

> " Only the Communist Party wages a ceaseless struggle against every phase of imperialist policy," states the main resolution of the Congress, " and tries to help and build up the closest bonds of international solidarity, based upon the common interests of the British and colonial workers and peasants against British imperialism."

The Congress was greatly helped by the participation of the delegation of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Germany. In their speeches to the Congress these comrades brought before the British comrades the advantage of their great revolutionary experiences in Germany, and also emphasised, amidst the applause of the delegates, that the mighty heroic struggles of the British workers had had an inspiring effect upon the German proletariat.

Up to now the C.P.G.B. has progressed but slowly and with considerable difficulty mainly because it was unable to solve the problem of its relationship to the masses. This problem has not yet been solved but the 12th Congress took a big step in that direction both by its clear answer on the character of the capitalist crisis, the rôle of reformism (in the Labour Party and trade unions) and by its clarion call for daily unremitting revolutionary mass work.

The British Communists are striving to prove themselves worthy leaders of the heroic working class : this 12th Congress showed that the Communist Party is working might and main to eliminate all of its weaknesses so that it will be able to play a decisive part in the mighty mass struggle now developing, struggles that must be initiated, prepared and led forward as part of the fight for the overthrow of British Imperialism and the establishment of a free Socialist Working Class Britain.

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PREPARING STRIKE ACTION ON THE RAILWAYS

By E. WOOLLEY

AS part of the offensive against the whole working class, the Railwaymen are being attacked. The Companies are demanding:

That the present percentage deduction (2½ per cent. up to 40s. and 5 per cent. on excess over 40s.) be replaced by a deduction of 10 per cent. from all earnings.

Provided that in the case of adult male wages staff who complete a full week's work, the deduction shall not operate so as to reduce their earnings below 38s. per week.

In the case of men who do not complete a full week's work, the datum of 38s. per week shall be applied on a daily basis.

The above proposals cover all conciliation and salaried grades, and have already caused such a revolt among railwaymen that the most astute manœuvres are being resorted to by the Union leaders, with a view to their adding to the long list of "services" to capitalism, which the leaders of British Trade Unionism have to their "credit" this year.

An All-round Attack

The wage demands are accompanying the most fierce attack that has ever been launched upon the conditions of a body of workers. Not a week has gone by in any depot but what some encroachment by the company has taken place.

Mass dismissals have become a regular thing. Entire railway shops have been closed down and their work transferred to others. Depots have been amalgamated with a consequent reduction of staff.

Tonnage rates have been cut until, to earn anything extra, porters have to strain their bodies to an extent that they can hardly walk home. They are worse cared for than the railway horses.

If a list could be made of men who have been ruptured at this work they would represent casualties as heavy as on a battlefield. At some depots all single horse vans go out without a van boy, meaning both extra work and responsibility for the driver and mass dismissals for the young worker.

Gangs have been cut down in goods depots and married porters, who long ago rose from van-boys, have been "de-graded" back.

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In every grade there has been, and continues to be, fierce speeding-up, with de-grading and dismissals.

All these attacks are guaranteed to be a thousand times greater under the Pooling of Railways which is being adopted by all the companies. The wage cut accompanies all this.

New Forces in the Revolt

In all these daily attacks the leaders of the Railway Unions have co-operated with the companies. When the 1,500 workers at the "Bricklayers' Arms" came out on strike against speeding-up, Humphreys, the Union official, was sent down to effect a "settlement" on the employers' terms. Railway workers have learned from these experiences and are displaying tremendous energy to organise the fight independent of the Unity House leaders.

At the last meeting of the Essex District Council of the National Union of Railwaymen they resolved:

> That the Council Executive Committee take full control of this district with plenary powers and full powers to co-opt. We ask all branches to arrange strike machinery and advise council secretary of all arrangements made.

The London Railwaymen's Vigilance Committee, with the support of 40 branch and district officials and committeemen, have called an all-grades Conference for December 3. These movements are going forward in face of instructions to the contrary from Cramp embodied in a circular warning all branches against "outside bodies" and "unofficial movements."

In Scotland the "independent" movement took concrete shape in September and embraces both N.U.R. and A.S.L.E. & F. At their rank-and-file Conference held on 25th September 25 N.U.R. branches, 6 A.S.L.E. & F. branches, along with the Glasgow and West of Scotland District Council of the N.U.R., decided upon action against the Pool and adopted a fighting programme for shorter hours, against speeding-up, retaining of grades and compensation from the company for workers transferred. This Conference of 64 delegates met in spite of the ban placed upon it by the N.U.R. leaders.

In all parts of the country a revolt is in operation against the proposed wage cut and against treachery from the Union leaders. All railway workers remember how the leaders, even after mass meetings had turned down the Wages Board award in 1931, manœuvred it through for the companies.

Railway workers have learned the lessons of these betrayals, but what we must remember is that the Union leaders also learn new methods of treachery and if they are to be defeated, the widest explanation of their latest methods need to be spread among railway workers.

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Lessons of the Cotton Strikes

Of supreme value in this respect are the lessons of the recent great strikes of weavers and spinners in Lancashire.

The weavers had openly fought their leaders' sell-out policy for three years. These leaders had signed agreements for working the more-loom-to-a-weaver system, but the members, by mass marches on the union office, forced them to repudiate their own signatures.

In 1931 the rank-and-file weavers forced a strike which secured a complete victory against more looms. But the employers and Union leaders developed new methods of strategy and drove into the weavers' ranks to an extent that they had half the mills on either wage-cuts or more looms.

In Burnley the strike wave again developed and swept the town clean of blacklegs. Against the wish of the officials, mass marches from Burnley extended the strike to all North-East Lancashire towns.

There has never been a strike to surpass it for militancy and determination to win. The leaders had been exposed. All strikers knew them as strike breakers.

Yet in spite of these facts, those leaders were able to disorganise this solid strike and force a return to work on the employers' terms.

How and why they were able to do this must be learned by every rail-worker, and by every other worker. What all the brute force of the state failed to do, the Union leaders managed to do.

They called off the strike. Each individual striker wanted to continue the fight against wage-cuts and more looms, but not being organised to do so, the decision of the Union leaders spread confusion in the strikers' ranks and the strike was broken.

Railwaymen are well organised, they feel that their Trade Union is a power. This is true, but the question of who controls this organised power will determine its use.

There were over a million members of the German Social-Democratic Party pledged to fight against war in 1914, but this well-organised Party was made useless in this fight by the treachery of the leaders.

> The masses could not act in an organised fashion because their organisation previously created (an organisation embodied in a "handful" of Legiens, Kautskys, Scheidemanns) had betrayed them. As for the creation of new organisation, time is required, determination to throw out the old, rotten, obsolete organisation is required.
>
> (*Lenin and the Second International*, p. 36.)

Essex District Council has commenced to "create the new" and "throw out the old. . . ." The victory against the demands of the

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Company will be determined by the extent to which the new is created and the old is thrown out.

The " new " is the control of Union branch by the members and the throwing out of the old is the breaking of the control over the Union branch by the treacherous Union leaders.

The " new " is the developing of unity of all sections in the depots under the leadership of the most militant workers.

The throwing out of the old is being got by the wide campaign in the depots to break the influence of the Union leaders and prove to every worker that strike preparation, and action under the workers own control, can paralyse the employers and secure a full victory for the workers.

What To Do

How to do it. Essex District has given the lead for strike organisation. The existing machinery that can be controlled by the workers are the union branches and departmental committees.

For each rail depot there are one or two N.U.R. branches, an A.S.L.E. & F. branch, a R.C.A. branch and a departmental committee.

The first aim is a meeting of all workers in the depot to discuss strike preparation. If there is a fighting departmental committee they can convene it. But no time can be lost.

The most militant union branch, after deciding that such an all-in depot meeting is essential, should take the initiative in calling it. Its members on the departmental committee could demand a meeting of the committee to discuss it. If they fail, then they have shown where the members of the departmental committee stand.

Otherwise they should raise the question with all other Union branches with members working in the depot, and call the meeting with them.

If the other branches won't co-operate, then, as there is no time to lose, the one branch should call the depot meeting on their own initiative.

Such a call would meet with an immediate response.

The aim is to get a Committee, representing all sections in the depot elected, which has the full support of the workers and the Union branches.

As to whether this Committee is the existing departmental committee broadened out, or an entirely new committee, is best left to be worked out in relation to the particular conditions in each depot.

At these depot meetings the lessons of the textile strikers and the lessons of the 1931 Wages Board award, should be a special point on the agenda.

With the development of such organisation in one depot, the near-by depot should be approached and in this way the strike preparations broadened out.

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Every " fighting " speech of the Union leaders should be examined and its aim explained to all in the depot.

" *Palliative Remedies—Useless* "

In this respect the *Railway Review* is conducting some very tricky propaganda. Since June of this year it has developed an " uncompromising " attack on capitalism. Its method is 100 per cent. " revolutionary : "

> Palliative remedies are useless. Anything that leaves the present system intact falls short of requirements. So long as capitalism reigns supreme the working class will have to bear the burden of suffering, and it is in an effort to speed the passing of capitalism that our article is penned. (Editorial, June 10, 1932.)

At this time the big job was to aid the companies with mass dismissals. In the same issue it was reported that 300 G.W.R. drivers had been forced to retire, and on page 3 we read :

> The continued depression in trade has so eaten into the traffic receipts on the railways that redundancy of staff is now beyond dispute.

" Palliative remedies are useless " ; to fight against mass dismissals would only be a " palliative." It is in this way that the " revolutionary " language is used to aid the companies in their job of making the workers bear the burden of falling receipts.

In the November 11 issue we read the same thing : " Those of us in the railway world have been brought face to face with questions arising from falling receipts on many occasions, and the worsening of conditions during the last few years has been due to the fact that regard has been paid by the National Wages Board to the dividend paying capacity of the railway industry, and *as long as we live under a state of capitalism this state of affairs is bound to exist.*" (Our emphasis, E.W.).

Week after week they pour out the message that worsened conditions are inevitable, that " palliative remedies are useless." In other words they have developed the theory that nothing can be won for the workers under the present system.

The conclusion from this is to accept the companies' cuts under protest, while pressing for a change in system.

Was it not on this basis that they signed the Wages Board award cuts of 1931 ?

The Union leaders then accepted a wage cut on the understanding that the companies would accept the addendum of a " comprehensive national organisation of all forms of transport under public ownership and control."

It was prefaced by " Whilst concurring in the findings which provide a measure of assistance for the purpose of enabling the Companies to

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encounter the immediate difficulties, we desire at the same time to state that in our opinion this enquiry has clearly revealed the necessity for other action. . . ."

Such was the point of view of the three railway Unions when they accepted the cuts in 1931 (after many " fighting " speeches) and is even to-day as the previous quotations prove, still their policy.

Dealing with " the Remedy " in the *Railway Review* of November 11 they say :

> People are clamouring for that which is available, but cannot get it because of the pernicious system under which we live.

" Cannot get it "—Rail workers by strike action will fight to maintain " that which is available," and even more, of the good things of life.

After making out that as long as the capitalist system lasts we cannot expect other than wage cuts and unemployment, and that it is no use fighting against them, one would think that the leaders of the Railway Unions were going right out to organise insurrection to end capitalism.

Not at all, fellow reader, this leading article on " The Remedy " finishes up with :

> *Every move in the direction of co-ordination is a step in the right direction.*

Thus, in every way the Union leaders behind their " fighting " speeches put forward the point of view of the Companies of :

(1) Face facts : as long as capitalism exists workers must have wage cuts and redundancy is inevitable.

(2) The salvation is " co-ordination " ; in more clear language : pooling, speeding-up, and capitalist rationalisation in all its forms.

These facts need to be explained to all railway workers as part of the main strike preparation, namely, the breaking of the power of the Union leaders to impose on the railway workers, by their trickster manœuvres, the demands of Railway Capitalism.

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THE STRUGGLES OF THE UNEMPLOYED

By PAT DEVINE

THE optimistic note struck by many economists and capitalist politicians regarding the " drive to prosperity " has definitely changed during the past year to a more or less general acceptance of the permanency of a huge unemployed army.

This view was concretely expressed by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Chamberlain, in the House of Commons on November 8 in his concluding remarks on the Unemployment debate :

> . . . We cannot expect that anything we can do in the immediate future is going to, let us say, cut the present unemployment in half . . . . we still have to face up to the fact that there are going to be a large number—a million or more—of persons for whom we cannot expect to find regular employment in their own trades either this winter or next winter, or perhaps for many winters to come. (*Hansard.*)

In September, 1929, the number of insured workers recorded as unemployed was 1,166,000. A year later the figure had risen to 2,177,000, and by 1931 to 2,803,000. In September of this year it stood at the enormous figure of 2,848,500.

On top of this there are the unemployed men and women who do not sign on, or who have been completely cut off the Labour Exchanges. This number is variously estimated at anything from 400,000 to 500,000, making a total unemployed army at the moment of approximately three million-and-a-quarter.

That the problem is of a world-wide character can be seen from the fact that in all the capitalist countries, America, Germany, Poland, Canada, France, &c., unemployment is growing by leaps and bounds. Only in the Soviet Union, where the workers are marching forward building Socialism is there no unemployment.

Since 1920 there have been numerous schemes for meeting the unemployed situation put forward by the various Governments, including the two Labour Governments. These have ranged from Poor Law Relief, relief works with or without Exchequer Grants, emigration, systematic short-time, institutional training for both disabled and fit men, training with employers, juvenile training, land settlement, afforestation, road construction, land drainage, Trade Facilities Acts, Exports Credits, to State Subsidy for industry.

Emigration from this country in former years was about 100,000. Now it is the other way round and there are 6,000 to 7,000 more people

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coming into the country than going out. Emigration has been stopped because of the depression in the colonies.

Since 1920 the unemployed have been continuously struggling for the right to live. Tremendous demonstrations up to the beginning of 1931 were able to force various concessions from the Governments.

Local Authorities who come directly up against this mass pressure were compelled to expend money on various schemes as a result of which the indebtedness of the local authorities in the 10 years preceding 1931 increased from £658,000,000 to £1,223,000,000.

On top of this the Unemployment Insurance Fund accumulated a debt of over £100,000,000.

The fall of the Labour Government, and the division of labour between MacDonald and Henderson over the methods of carrying out the proposals of the Economy Commission resulting in the election of the National Government, is now history.

The adoption of the Means Test by the National Government was the signal for a whole series of demonstrations of employed and unemployed throughout the country in which the pent-up feelings of indignation against the cuts expressed themselves in the most militant action yet witnessed up to that time.

In Glasgow, Dundee, London, and Bristol the workers actually demonstrated for days. Hand-to-hand struggles with the police were the order of the day. Thousands of pounds worth of damages were caused everywhere.

With varying degrees of intensity the struggle of the unemployed against starvation has developed this year into a really determined political fight against the whole starvation policy of the National Government. Mr. Betterton, Minister of Labour, in the House of Commons on November 4 said:

> By balancing our budget we have been able to avoid to a very large extent the misfortunes which have befallen other countries, and by promoting the establishment of a lower rate of interest we have done a great deal to assist industry in general.

But have "we"? By balancing "your" budget, Mr. Betterton, at the expense of the lives of thousands of working class men, women and children, you have brought about a very high expression of resistance from the unemployed workers in the country who are beginning to challenge the whole basis of the right of capitalism to continue its vicious starvation programme.

Birkenhead, Belfast and the National Hunger March represent a new stage in the development of the workers' struggle.

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In Birkenhead, despite a campaign of terror only equalled by the brutality of Czarism, the unemployed carried on a street battle for three days in which the " traditional fear and respect of the British worker for the police " was displaced by revolutionary working class initiative in combating unprovoked attacks. Birkenhead was like a tonic to the workers all over the world, and especially in Britain.

Following closely on its heels came the heroic inspiring battle of the Belfast relief workers, supported by thousands of employed and unemployed workers throughout the city.

The rifles, machine-guns and armoured cars of British Imperialism in Ireland were met by the mass opposition of the masses of workers, who threw up barricades and not only defended themselves but courageously fought back against the attacks.

In spite of the frenzied efforts of the capitalists to carry out their economy measures the heroic struggles in Belfast and Birkenhead won substantial victories.

All over Britain, Belfast and Birkenhead were on the lips of every worker. A new stage in the struggle against starvation had been reached. No longer were the masses of workers prepared to accept the cant and humbug of the Labour Party leadership about waiting for a third Labour Government.

The rôle of Social-Reformism in this connection was brought clearly to the surface in Parliament on October 19 when Sir Stafford Cripps said :

> What are we to say to the unemployed of Bristol, who point to Birkenhead ? We who are daily trying to persuade them that they will achieve nothing by rioting, that they can only achieve by constitutional means, are met at once by the argument :—*But what happened in Birkenhead ? What happened in Belfast ?* Is any body going to convince an unemployed man who is told by a Communist that the way in which he can force relief out of a local authority is by rioting, that these concessions have not been given as a result of force ?

This is the classical example of just exactly what the Labour leadership means for the working class.

The decisive rôle of the unemployed in the leadership of the working class struggle was more clearly seen in the splendid Hunger March just concluded.

Fifteen hundred men and women marched from all parts of the country to London to present a One Million Signature Petition demanding the Abolition of the Means Test, Return of the 10 per cent. Benefit Cuts, Abolition of the Anomalies Bill, Return of the Cuts in Social Services.

Everywhere they went they were enthusiastically acclaimed by the massed thousands of workers who recognised in the marchers the advance

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guard of the working class army against the National Government. Trade Union Branches, Co-operative and other working class organisations, including the Communist Party and the rank-and-file of the I.L.P. rallied magnificently to the various Reception Committees and demonstrated in the most decisive manner since the general strike the unity of the working class against Capitalism.

On the other hand the National Government conducted a well-organised and determined campaign against the march. Every capitalist newspaper turned its " guns " against the marchers. All the threadbare stunts, Communist Riot, Moscow Gold, &c., were brought out—but in vain. The marchers steadily closed in on London, reaching millions of workers on the way and carrying the message of revolt into every hamlet in the country.

In the forefront of the capitalist attack was the leadership of the Trades Union Congress. The statement of Citrine against the march was broadcast throughout the length and breadth of the land, and the march painted not as a working class effort but as a " Communist Stunt."

But the marchers reached London and received the largest and most militant welcome yet seen in the metropolis. Hundreds of thousands of workers rallied to their support. The Government mobilised the largest force of police on record. The military were on hand ready for any emergency call. The sound of the marching feet reverberated throughout Britain, and across the seas to the Continent and America. The atmosphere of London was electric. Sir John Gilmour warned the Public to keep away from the demonstrations. Lord Trenchard, Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, warned the populace to keep away from the marchers.

Sir Charles Biron, on the Bench at Bow Street, informed the public that " it was their duty to assist the police in carrying out its duty on pain of being arrested for not doing so."

But the solidarity of the working class with the marchers grew by leaps and bounds.

Then John McGovern, I.L.P. Member of Parliament for Shettleston, entered the breach. After being rebuked by the March Council for his impudent assertions that he represented them and had authority to introduce a deputation to Parliament, he got up in Parliament on a point of special privilege on October 31, and said :

> I met Mr. Wal Hannington and Mr. Harry McShane, leaders of the unemployed marchers, on Friday and made that offer (to provide the necessary machinery for presentation of the petition) to them on behalf of the unemployed hunger marchers.
>
> I was informed this morning by Mr. McShane that their Council discussed the offer yesterday and decided to reject this necessary medium, and to rely on their mass strength to force Parliament to allow their deputation to appear at the Bar.

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> I regret this decision and come to the conclusion that the unemployed leaders do not desire to appear at the Bar. I feel that the hunger marchers will resent the loss of this opportunity . . . . .

True to type the world over, left Social-Democracy was rallying to the defence of capitalism in its hour of need.

The comment of the capitalist columnist, E. Clepham Palmer, in the *News-Chronicle* of November 2 is sufficient:

> A year ago Mr. John McGovern, the Clydeside M.P., was forcibly removed from the House of Commons because he refused to accept the constitutional procedure of the House and defied the Authority of the Speaker.
>
> This week the same Mr. McGovern with the utmost dignity rebuked those outside the House who wished to present a petition on behalf of the unemployed and to appear at the Bar.
>
> The Tories cheered. For the first time in his Parliamentary life Mr. McGovern—firebrand, revolutionary, mob orator—found himself warmly supported from all parts of the House.
>
> The hand of Mr. Maxton is to be seen behind the new dignity of Mr. McGovern. Their plan of campaign appears to be to discredit Lansbury-led Labour and give the impression that they alone are the real leaders of the people—and quite respectable ones.

The revolutionary working class in the fire of struggle will know how to handle this mob!

The struggles of the unemployed during and leading up to the Hunger March are clear indications of their leading rôle in the whole fight against the capitalist offensive. In all the activities up-to-date, there has however been one big outstanding weakness which must be remedied. Insufficient attention has been given to the task of bringing the employed workers into the everyday struggles and welding a unity of action that will still further carry the movement to a higher stage than at present.

With the publication of the Royal Commission Report on Unemployment the plans of the Government to thrust the burden on to the shoulders of the employed become clear. The report contains many of the most vicious proposals yet made by any Government. Benefit payments and benefit periods are to be reduced. The stigma of the Poor Law is placed on every unemployed man and woman. A well-directed drive is being made to force the young workers into the army. The recommendations contain an effort to divide the workers into categories of good workmen and bad workmen.

Capitalism has bared its teeth. In effect they say "the only hope of a solution of the crisis is a further intensification of the attack on the elementary standards of life of the masses."

WW

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The great need of the moment for the workers is a broad united front movement that will challenge the attack everywhere it shows itself. The N.U.W.M. which has been in the forefront of the struggles of the unemployed, cannot tackle the situation alone. Every trade union branch, Co-operative and other working class organisation, together with the rank-and-file members of the I.L.P. and the Communist Party must energetically take up the question of struggle against the Royal Commission report.

Extra special efforts are being made on the part of all the reactionary forces inside and outside the working class movement to sidetrack the struggles and divert them into "sane constitutional channels."

The T.U.C. just recently issued an instruction to all its connections, Trades Councils, &c., urging them to form Unemployed Associations and to take the necessary steps for "getting sports and educational facilities" for the unemployed and take them away from "subversive influences." Coming as it does at the height of the struggle this move is a definite call for the demobilisation of the workers and the splitting of the resistance to the Government attacks.

Together with this go the frantic efforts of the Society of Friends, Rotarians, Churches, &c., to form "self-help schemes" through which the unemployed will be taught boot repairing, gardening, and other things, together with getting an occasional concert or social as a means of keeping them off the streets.

George Lansbury, in the House on November 4, went into ecstacies about the activities of these Societies:

> I am always lost in admiration of the Society (Society of Friends) and I hope the Government will give all possible support to the Society . . . . and the Council of Social Service.

The issues are clear. By their mass action the unemployed have won substantial victories all over the country. Even Parliament was compelled to break in on an important debate for a discussion of the problem. In face of the ever-growing determination to struggle against starvation all the forces of the Government are arrayed against the workers. In the forefront of the Government attacks are the leadership of the T.U.C., Labour Party and the I.L.P.

There is a paramount need for a powerful United Front Movement that will weld all the militant working class forces and organisations into a powerful movement against the Means Test, Royal Commission Report and the National Government.

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I.L.P. 'REVOLUTIONARY POLICY'—DISCUSSION

[*The discussion opened three months ago by an "Ex-I.L.P.'er" on "The Future of the I.L.P.: What is a Revolutionary Policy?" is here continued. As is stated at the end of the Editor's Reply to Middleton Murry, these pages are still open to an expression of opinion from Left I.L.P.'ers.*"]

I.—Revolution and Political Realism

By J. MIDDLETON MURRY

YOUR editorial note requesting that the discussion should be confined to the question: "What is Revolutionary Policy as understood by Left I.L.P.'ers?" is really impossible to obey. The clarity which you hope to achieve by narrowly defining the issue will be quite specious.

The trouble is that Revolutionary Policy can be formulated on many levels. The most abstract is generally the most favoured, and it is also the most remote from actual necessities. Whether or not I am a left I.L.P.'er, I have not the faintest difficulty in accepting, on the abstract level, the revolutionary policy formulated by the Communist International. So far as mere theory goes, I am quite contented with it. The real and substantial question is the manner of applying a policy, on the formulation of which, on the abstract level, agreement might be easy enough. Thus, to take one recent example, we could easily agree that, in the abstract, the demonstration of the Hunger Marchers in London was a right and proper move; but we might, and we probably should, differ profoundly about the way the Hunger March should have been led, controlled, and "inspired." I, for example, who am no pacifist on principle, hold that the demonstration would have been more impressive and *effective* had it been resolutely pacific, and had full use been made of its magnificent opportunities for simple propaganda, not for C.P. Socialism as against I.L.P. Socialism, or even for either as against Labour Party "Socialism"—but purely and simply for Socialism. And a difference of opinion so radical and immediate as this is perfectly compatible with complete agreement on the theoretical formulation of "revolutionary policy."

My suggestion, in this brief contribution to your discussion, is that the mistake is to formulate the issue as one between the I.L.P. and the C.P. as they actually exist.

I imagine that no genuine revolutionary Socialist, whether he is a member of the C.P. or the I.L.P., is satisfied with the organisation to

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which he belongs. There is no question of either being entirely right, except perhaps in the mind of the pure fanatic. The question is, much rather, which of the two parties has the greater potentiality of future rightness.

Once the question is posited in those terms, the answer is seen to depend upon the estimate, made by the individual with the choice before him, of the way in which the world situation and the English situation will develop. If one believes, on a realistic judgment of the facts, that a revolutionary situation is likely in this country within the next five years, then I think one's proper place is with the C.P. But if this estimate of the future appears fallacious—as it does to me—then one's place cannot be with a party which builds so much on the expectation of speedy convulsion. One is bound to choose the party which, being more flexible in its judgment of possibilities, is likely to concentrate most energy on the kind of effort which is most necessary if the revolutionary situation should be long delayed, or even so different from C.P. expectation as to be unrecognisable.

This most necessary kind of effort, in my judgment, is the gradual formation of a nucleus of convinced revolutionary Socialists, whose minds are flexible enough to entertain manifold possibilities in the actual development of the situation, and whose conviction of the necessity of the social revolution is profound enough to enable them to labour patiently, and with undiminished enthusiasm, through a period of deferred, and even of waning hope. What we need, in the revolutionary Socialist movement in this country above all others, is men of moral quality and endurance.

In the last resort, I incline to believe, the critical question for a true judgment of the situation in this country is the question of the nature and strength of the State. My own personal conviction is that the C.P. profoundly misjudges the strength of the State in Great Britain. And its judgment is not corrected, but rather dangerously warped, by the influence of the Comintern. Naturally, owing to the preponderant influence of Russian experience in the Comintern, English communists are tempted to conceive the British State as conforming exactly to the pattern of the Russian State before the Revolution. But that identity is true only in the realm of the most abstract Marxian analysis. For the purposes of the practical revolutionary socialist the British State and the Russian pre-revolutionary State are utterly different from another. In Britain the State is not felt or recognised by the vast majority of the population as an alien and oppressive artefact. It is much rather felt (though unconsciously) to be the concrete expression of their own will to be a national unity.

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This is, no doubt, "bourgeois" psychology; but to call a thing bourgeois does not conjure it out of existence. This psychological attitude towards the British State is widespread, and deep-rooted. And the unconscious resistance it offers to any deliberate revolutionary action is tremendous. This unconscious resistance is, I believe, fantastically under-estimated by the C.P., with the result that the line which the C.P. takes often has the effect of consolidating that resistance rather than undermining it.

So we pass to the major criticism of the C.P. in this country. (I remind you that I am not suggesting that the I.L.P. is actually superior to the C.P. in its analysis of the realities of the situation—it certainly is not; but only that *in its very theoretical hesitations* the I.L.P. is more instinctively obedient to those realities than the C.P. and therefore offers the greater potentiality of attracting the enduring revolutionary Socialist nucleus.) This major criticism of the C.P. is that it fails to relate its abstract analysis of the situation to the psychological facts. It is at present incapable of making the necessary descent from theory into social and political reality. Therefore its estimates of the developments in the immediate future are rather wish-fulfilments than realistic judgments; and its lines of action based on those mistaken estimates are more likely to alienate than attract the mass of the workers. The danger of crying "Wolf! Wolf!" too often in this country is prodigious. It makes smooth the path of Capitalism into Social-Fascism.

EDITORIAL REPLY.

We print the contribution of Middleton Murry as that of a leading spokesman of the Independent Labour Party, although hardly of the left-wing.

This contribution may be of assistance to the discussion as providing a characteristic statement of the official "revolutionary policy" of the I.L.P., with its lip-service to revolution "on the abstract level," and practical opposition to all revolutionary working class policy, tactics, organisation and activity. The writer in this case even goes so far as to state that he has "not the faintest difficulty in accepting, on the abstract level, the revolutionary policy formulated by the Communist International"—apparently unaware that the theory and practice of the Communist International are inseparable and that it is not possible to "accept" the theory of the Communist International and oppose its practical realisation, the line of the Communist Party and the obligation of work in the Communist Party. The theory of the Communist International is no abstract theory of a revolution in general, but a fully concrete theory of the whole working class struggle at every stage, of the conditions and tactics of the working class struggle, and of the principles and organisation of the working class party,

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as well as of the line of development from the immediate existing struggles to the proletarian revolution and the building of Socialism. A short study of the Constitution, Programme and Twenty-one Points of the Communist International will disillusion even this facile formula-swallower, and convince him that it leaves not a single noose-hole for lip-service revolutionism, "on the abstract level," that he must either accept it or fight it, but cannot both "accept" it and fight it.

The heart of the position expressed by Middleton Murry and all his group is just this "abstract" approach to revolution—concealing practical opposition to the working class struggle. *For them, Socialism—the revolution—is divorced from the working class struggle, despite their "Marxist" professions.*

They want a propaganda of "Socialism pure and simple" ("not for C.P. Socialism as against I.L.P. Socialism, or even for either as against Labour Party "Socialism"—but purely and simply for Socialism") i.e., the abstract propaganda of Socialism as an ideal of a just society, fully divorced from the issues of the class struggle, which in reality make the contents of the fight for Socialism and underlie the differences between the parties. This neutral super-class conception of Socialism is the hall-mark of petit-bourgeois socialism. Contrast the constant insistence of Marx in sharply discriminating Communism from "petit-bourgeois socialism," "social-democracy," "doctrinaire socialism" and all the other forms of "socialism" separated from the revolutionary working class struggle.

The path to this socialist ideal is seen by petit-bourgeois socialism as the preaching of the gospel of "socialism" to the unconverted, and gradual accumulation of a band of faithful disciples and converts. "Let us" declares Maxton in a recent article on "The Immediate Job of the I.L.P." in the "New Leader" (November 11, 1932), "take our minds away from electioneering and electoral success, and devote ourselves to the task of making socialists." The two alternatives are thus seen as either parliamentarism or abstract propaganda ("making socialists"), not the prosecution and organisation of the working class struggle against the capitalist class, through which process alone revolutionary consciousness and revolutionary organisation can be developed. "The most necessary kind of effort," declares Murry, "is the gradual formation of a nucleus of convinced revolutionary socialists." Here we have the familiar outlook of the intellectual socialist neophyte, for whom the mass movement does not exist: he sees only the task of gradually building up a little band of faithful disciples and converts, with no suggestion of class basis or connection, to be ready for a hypothetical future day when a "revolutionary situation" will occur and they will take control (not "within the next five years," he hastens to assure us, thinking that he has thereby delivered a smashing blow to the line of the Communist Party, as if that party's existence and work, as the leader of

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the workers' struggle at every stage, depended on the date of the revolution), instead of understanding that it is out of the existing developing mass struggle against capitalism, through the rôle of the revolutionary workers' party, of the Communist Party, that the future revolutionary situation will develop, and is at the same time prepared for by the working class.

All this is the typical utopian abstract line of I.L.P. propaganda, and indeed at bottom (despite the newly-added "revolutionary" trappings) identical with the whole traditional British school of abstract socialist propaganda, separate from the mass struggle. It is the exact contrary to the line of Marxism, the line of the revolutionary class struggle. For Marxism, the path to socialism is the path of the working class struggle. It is out of the actual struggle that develops the working class vanguard, tried in the fight and linked with the masses by a thousand ties, building up the mass Communist Party, to guide the fight. The rôle of theory is not that of a gospel from heaven to be preached by intellectual converts to the ignorant workers; it is a direct part of the struggle, assisting to clear and make conscious the revolutionary rôle of the working class struggle and the necessary path of advance.

Murry makes his "major criticism" of the Communist Party that it is "incapable of making the necessary descent from theory into social and political reality." The exact reverse is the case. It is just the I.L.P. that preaches socialism and revolution "on the abstract level" and never brings them into contact with reality. The strength of the C.P. is precisely that it is rooted in the mass struggle, that is to say, in the primary "social and political reality" of concern to revolutionaries. Compare the recent Hunger March and mass demonstrations, drawing hundreds of thousands of workers into the fight, and with the Communist Party in the heart of the fight and leading, at the same time as the I.L.P. remained on the fringes, endeavouring to insert its hold in order to divert the movement into parliamentarian channels—fortunately in vain. This was a characteristic demonstration which party is the closer to social and political reality.

But Murry means something very different by "social and political reality." By "social and political reality," he means, as his explanation makes clear, the "strength of the State in Great Britain," i.e., the strength of the capitalist State, of capitalism and its hold on the workers. This is his "social and political reality." This he claims (on what grounds?) that the Communist Party "under-estimates." To this (i.e., capitalism) he declares that the I.L.P. is "more instinctively obedient" (very true). It is here that the seemingly innocent utopian and abstract approach of the I.L.P. to the question of socialism and the revolution reveals its true character as practical opposition to the working class struggle and surrender to capitalism.

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The Hunger March demonstration in London, says Murry, was not actually wrong ; " in the abstract " (!) it might even be regarded as " right and proper " ; but it should have been " resolutely pacific." This is worthy of the Home Secretary. Hordes of specially-prepared mounted police, armed with long staves, and under military direction, are let loose on a peaceful demonstration of unarmed and defenceless workers, and strike and trample right and left. The workers, thus set upon, make what shift they can to defend themselves with bits of branches from trees and stones, and even so make a good showing against the police, full of deepest significance and encouragement for the future. Even bourgeois observers write to the press to protest against the unprovoked attacks by the police. But our " revolutionary socialist," Murry, complains, not of the violence and disorder of the police, but that the workers were not sufficiently " pacific." Such " revolutionaries " we hope that every sincere left worker in the I.L.P. will spit on.

Britain is " different," says Murry. So has every single " socialist " reactionary argued against Marxism in every country in the world—not least in Russia, where the profound Christian faith of the moujik was long known by all cultured people to make revolution impossible and Marxism inapplicable, until facts proved the contrary. Here in Britain, says Murry, the " vast majority of the population " regard the State, not as an " alien and oppressive " force, but as " the concrete expression of their own will to be a national unity." H'm, H'm. How exactly he knows the mind of the " vast majority of the population " ! A little further examination of the tone of current popular talk about the police, about the law-courts and magistrates, about parsons or about politicians, might give a different picture. It might be suggested that the " vast majority of the population " have never yet thought about the State as such or thought to question it ; they have just taken it for granted, like a natural force, with enormous power, but without yet realising their power to change it (but also without any sophistical theories, conscious or unconscious, of " the concrete expression of their will to be a national unity ") ; but the experience of the war, of the General Strike, of the Means Test, of the police raids and violence, are rapidly bringing increasing numbers to question it and to become conscious of the fight against it as the organ of the oppressing class.

But granted that the hold of the capitalist state and of capitalist institutions on the outlook of the workers in Britain is still undoubtedly strong. To what does Murry lead in stressing this? Does he lead to the necessity of intensifying our efforts to fight and undermine this hold, to expose the true character of the state in relation to all the real issues and interests of the workers and of the working class struggle, and thus to awaken wider and wider numbers of workers to the necessity of its overthrow? No ; he leads to the conclusion of the necessity of greater " obedience to these realities," i.e.,

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capitulation to the capitalist state. That is his real line, and the real line of his opposition to Communism. An examination of his book, "The Necessity of Communism," with its "revolutionary programme" of a "decent minimum wage" and the "balancing of the Budget by an increase of direct taxation" as his conception of the revolution, sufficiently reveals his real character as a very limited bourgeois-liberal masquerading under a "Communist" label.

We would conclude with a question to left I.L.P.'ers: Does this expression of I.L.P. "revolutionary policy" express their outlook? If not, we hope that serious left I.L.P.'ers will not hesitate to express their views on it, and to make clear their differences from it.—Editor, LABOUR MONTHLY.

II.—Is there a Revolutionary Policy in the I.L.P.?

By P. L. DOOLEY

VARYING contributions have been made by I.L.P.'ers and others in recent issues of the LABOUR MONTHLY on the question of the I.L.P. and its revolutionary policy, some critical, some condemnatory but none to me seem to express the feeling of the younger militant element of the I.L.P. with whom I have had considerable contact.

What did we see during the period of the Labour Government? We saw that far from pursuing a policy which would benefit the workers, it proceeded along rigidly capitalist lines, as anti-working class as any of its predecessors. The only result was that it left its members in the very depths of despair and confusion—their faith in their leaders gone, their conditions materially worsened, and the way open and examples shown for increased attacks on their livelihood from the National Government who followed them.

Throughout this period the I.L.P. proclaimed the errors of the Labour Party, but at the following election once again gave official support to that party.

The ensuing debacle provided the I.L.P. with an opportunity to review its position with the Labour Party, and despite the exposure of the latter and its still pitifully inadequate programme we discovered to our horror that our leaders who had so loudly indicted the Labour Party with all its works and pomps were still loathe to sever all connections with them.

Maxton's fighting lead on this important question was to proclaim his "complete neutrality" (Scottish Divisional Conference, 1931),

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whilst the N.A.C. (National Administrative Council of the I.L.P.) thought it "unwise." Realising the uselessness of attempting to stem the rising tide of disgust, and hostility emanating from a large section of its membership, the N.A.C. made a last effort to maintain the connection with the Labour Party by suggesting conditional affiliation. Failing in that, they bowed to the inevitable, and graciously acknowledged their readiness to press forward for disaffiliation. Throughout all these protracted debates and negotiations, a number of us were clearly convinced that disaffiliation was not desired by the leaders and that differences of policy were a secondary consideration to those of Standing Orders.

Numerous statements by the N.A.C. permit of no ambiguity on this fundamental question. The following is a N.A.C. recommendation for the Special Conference.

> In view of the refusal of the National Executive of the Labour Party to discuss with representatives of the I.L.P. proposals for the revision of Standing Orders of the Parliamentary Labour Party, which the last Annual Conference decided to be necessary, the N.A.C. recommend to the Conference to disaffiliate immediately from the Labour Party. (*New Leader*, July 15, 1932.)

The Special Conference came and went and with it the great hopes and aspirations of many militant members, when they learnt how the suggestions for the supposed New Policy had been hopelessly defeated at Bradford, proving the "old gang" had, like the Bourbons "learned nothing," and intended to continue along the same old lines of local and national democratic machinery. Said Mr. Brockway at the Summer School, 1932:

> The I.L.P. is all out to get Parliamentary and Municipal power.

And Maxton, at the Bradford Conference:

> We must try to get a Parliamentary majority in the next five years.

This proves that if the problem of obtaining power had been thought of at all it was regarded as something in the distant future, and at the same time that it disregarded the difficulties of a similar fight (parliamentary democracy) as the Labour Party, who already have exhausted all the tricks of that trade with little success. Meanwhile, the Revolutionary Policy Committee (R.P.C.) was growing in daring if not in strength. Their weak state was proved by the facility with which their efforts were rejected at Bradford.

Before dealing with this revolutionary policy it should be stated that the tendency of previous contributors appears to take for granted that the policy of the R.P.C., such as it is, is the policy of the I.L.P. Happily or unhappily, such is not the case. All consideration of such policy is postponed until the *next* Easter Conference. In this period of "capitalist

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collapse" the I.L.P. can afford to waste nine months before deciding upon a policy or attempting to "clarify the position."

Lack of unanimity on this question of revolutionary policy is amply provided in the correspondence columns of the *New Leader* (issues of November 11 and 18), in reply to Dr. Smith who has the temerity to ridicule the Party's fidelity to the ideal of political democracy.

E. Sandham, who, as a national propagandist, may be said to exercise some influence, wrote in the *New Leader* of November 18:

> With all its faults the parliamentary democratic weapon is still one with more possibilities than Dr. Smith allows it. *The I.L.P. philosophy is contained in this belief.* The I.L.P. split from the Labour Party has taken place mainly because the Labour Party is handling the parliamentary machine in so feeble a fashion, not because the I.L.P. has ceased to believe in parliament entirely while the Labour Party continues to do so. (My emphasis.—P.L.D.)

Another correspondent in the same issue, replying to Maxton's appeal to branches to get busy with propaganda, asks for clarity and some authoritative statement, he apparently being as confused as to the exact policy of the I.L.P. as I was myself during my last few months in it. I am afraid the inquirer will receive small enlightenment from Maxton, for of all the vague writers and speakers of the I.L.P. Maxton is singularly reticent and confusing on matters of this nature. The net result of such equivocation will undoubtedly result in a further breakaway of militant workers from the I.L.P. into the C.P., and I foresee a complete split at the coming Easter Conference.

Meanwhile, what of the revolutionary policy which is to affect a "complete transformation" of society as well as in the "heart and mind"?

I always understood that the term revolution meant a great and violent change. To Mr. Brockway has fallen the honour of giving a different interpretation to that word, an interpretation which obstinately remains obscure to me. Can anyone decide for me what "pacifist revolutionary technique" means? I cannot, neither can many other members of the I.L.P. It remains a mystery to Mr. Brockway in that he cannot translate it into a workable policy for which his Party is clamouring.

Comrade Cyril Butler, undaunted, has given us his definition, a definition which quite definitely excludes Violence, Direct Action and Strikes! In case the capitalists become scared by the operation of his revolutionary policy he hastens to reassure them that his "opinions and actions will be modified by the development of the actual struggle." Modified! Personally, I would like to know where his "struggle" will begin. Middleton Murry believes in his "body of men who are prepared

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to suffer violence but not offer it." Can any sane person imagine the capitalists blithely parting with the possessions they have clung to for so long, because a body of men and women demand them on moral grounds, or if they have a parliamentary backing. Where is Gandhi? In Jail, and his moral forces effectively crushed. What happened in Germany when the Social Democrats reached the height of their power? They were kicked out—and they went quietly, and the forces that they were to dispossess are crushing them more ruthlessly than before.

Remember the reception given to the Hunger Marchers when the whole forces of the State were waiting to crush them. Can we afford to ignore this portent of the coming struggle?

To continue along the lines of political democracy and moral movements is merely to dissipate energies which should be more fruitfully harnessed in the real revolutionary struggle; one which includes strikes, direct action and such violence as is necessary to overcome the forces which oppose us, the magnitude of which we should not under-estimate and the resistance to which is often under-estimated. Butler and Maxton alike are concerned to know from where the support for a particular policy will come, and where opposition. Butler will know where to expect opposition to his policy and action if he attended one of the recent demonstrations and pursued a policy which is likely to meet with opposition (which seems unlikely). Maxton anxiously scanning the municipal election results arrives at the following conclusion:

> A survey of the whole field does not yet indicate any revolutionary awakening. (*New Leader*, November 11.)

Blind to the fact that no longer can he expect support solely from the poll on the old programmes—whilst support was given to the real revolutionary action, of late, *i.e.*, the Hunger Marchers, he innocently beseeches his followers to go out into the parliamentary desert and agitate, ignoring the rising tide of revolt on his doorstep.

If the R.P.C. are prepared to adopt a Marxist policy (and advocate the reading of Marxist literature which they do) they ought to be prepared to adopt a Marxist policy which includes in the words of Marx himself (Communist Manifesto), "the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions." I commend to the consideration of the R.P.C. the words "forcible" and "all." Furthermore, they ought, if they renounce all their previous heresies, to join the only Marxist Party in this country, the C.P., realising that duplication of organisations, must minimise the sum total of revolutionary activity and further confuse the workers.

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THE COMMUNAL AWARD AND GANDHI

By BERNARD HOUGHTON

OF the numerous safeguards for British rule in India contrived by the Labour Ministers and endorsed by their successors, few are more important than the division of the electorate into water-tight compartments. Even with the limited enfranchisement of the Lothian Committee, elections conducted in the usual manner might result in Councils which would hinder and not assist the smooth running of the real dictatorship of Whitehall. Before everything it was essential to prevent elections on a straight national ticket, an issue which might unite all classes in an insistent demand for independence. The artificial division of the electorates has therefore from the commencement been a keynote of imperialist strategy. Nor was this a difficult task. Thanks to its isolation by mountains and the sea, long stationary Hindu society has crystallised into castes, precisely as in similar circumstances did that of ancient Egypt. The original division, Brahman, Kshattriya, Vaishya and Sudra corresponded with the priestly, royal, mercantile and slave divisions of Egypt. Through untold centuries of humble devotion, the Hindu religion, so necessary for landlordism, has for toilers and bourgeosie alike become bone of their bone and flesh of their flesh. Mingled with the mass of 220 million Hindus are some 70 million Moslems, sequelæ of the Tartar invasions, who profess a religion notorious for its bigotry and its fanaticism.

Could anything be more providential? As Sir John Strachey long ago pointed out, " the existence side by side of hostile creeds amongst the Indian people is one of the strong points in our political position in India." Communal electorates for the Moslems were accordingly established and the principle of divide and rule accepted as an integral part of representative government.

Accordingly at the first Round Table Conference we find the principles of electorates for religious communities further extended by representation for the Sikhs, Indian Christians and the Depressed Classes. By this manœuvre the Government hoped not only to paralyse the new Councils when formed, but to weaken and confuse the National Congress in the present struggle. At this Conference, too, the plan of the Labour Government stood plainly revealed. It was, firstly, to baffle the national movement by artificial divisions in the electorate; secondly, under the name of Federation to dilute heavily the Chambers at Delhi with British liegemen, the Princes; and thirdly, by means of safeguards such as

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control of the army, foreign affairs and finance and dictatorial powers for the Viceroy, to reduce the whole Constitution to a farce. Such a scheme affords not even the pretence of self-government; in practice it would retain power in British hands every whit as securely as at present. Yet Gandhi after skilful intrigues at Karachi, attended the second Conference as the sole representative of the National Congress, with this plan staring him in the face, although at Lahore and, less certainly, at Karachi, he had publicly pledged himself to independence. (In private he had informed Lord Irwin that he would not raise this issue). He accepted the plan of electorates by religion, though he boggled at certain details, particularly separate representation for the Untouchables.

After floods of vague rhetoric, in which Gandhi bore his part, the Conference broke up on the rock of the Moslem electorate. The Shaukat Ali Moslems, alone nominated by the Viceroy, like the Ulstermen in 1921, understood their importance in the British scheme, and they pitched their demands accordingly. The Government would have much preferred an agreement amongst the delegates, for such an agreement would have given the appearance of national approval to this important part of their scheme. As it was there was nothing for it but to decide the matter *ex cathedrâ*, a task which Sir S. Hoare tactfully referred to Mr. MacDonald.

On his return to Bombay, Gandhi, who with his backers, the Ahmedabad mill-owners, desired to continue negotiations, was almost immediately interned in Yervada Jail under a *lettre de cachet*. The new Secretary of State, Sir S. Hoare, by no means saw eye to eye with his predecessor or with the Labour Ministry. By temperament he is a plain, blunt man, having no use for the hypocrisy which filled so large a portion in the Indian speeches of Messrs. Benn and MacDonald. Ideologically the latter is a close analogue to Mr. Gandhi; Sir S. Hoare is his antithesis. In policy together with the Conservative majority, the latter stands for the iron hand; he will not brook even the appearance of equality with Indians; it is for Britain to dictate, for India to submit—such is his considered opinion. He cut Mr. Gandhi short at Bombay as summarily as when at the Conference he had intervened after the latter's "silken cords" speech. Unconditional surrender is his demand; only on its knees will he speak with the Congress.

Upon India now descended a reign of coercion excelling even that directed by the "socialist" Mr. Benn. Nationalists of all classes were imprisoned in tens of thousands; the Press was heavily gagged; government by ordinance obliterated all personal liberty, whilst the bombing of their homes explained to the tribesmen on the N.W. frontier what British civilisation means. At length in July Mr. MacDonald found time, in an interval between conferences, to make his communal award. The Backward Areas apart, it divided the electorate into upwards of

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twelve separate categories, some with dual votes. The award is indeed a *reductio ad absurdum* of the principle of divide and rule; officialdom would seem to have ridden its hobby to death. There is even a separate electorate for women, which proves incidentally that Mr. MacDonald and his advisers are lacking in a sense of completeness; surely they should have gone on to subdivide the women's electorates into married and single. Apart from the European community, the award pleased few in India. The Sikhs in particular were exasperated; many Moslems opposed it on principle; the Hindus perceived clearly all that it implied. It is unlikely that so preposterous a scheme will ever even reach Parliament.

Both at the Conference and in March Mr. Gandhi had declared that he would resist with his life any attempt to split the Hindu vote by an electorate for the depressed classes. After another warning in August, which elicitated a conciliatory letter from the Premier, he commenced to fast on the 20th September. The Hindu religion, it should be noted, holds self-suffering as the supremest of virtues. Of old, *tapas* (austerities) were believed to mould even the gods to one's will; to sit *dharna*, to fast, at a debtor's door in order to induce payment is held to be so potent as to be prohibited by law. Gandhi has affirmed that " if we suffer enough, the suffering must result in converting the administrators." The effect of the fast was electrical; all India was on tenterhooks even though, with Mr. Gandhi's dietary, he might probably have fasted long without evil results. Dr. Ahmedkar for the Untouchables and sundry Hindu notables hurried to Yervada, and within a week an agreement was come to. It provided a joint Hindu electorate, with seats ear-marked for the Untouchables much in excess of those allotted in the Government scheme. The Government, concealing its chagrin at this impairment of its plan, approved it with a simulated pleasure. But when Gandhi used the occasion to frame with Mr. Jayakar fresh proposals for negotiations, silence again enveloped him. Sir S. Hoare is immovable; he will not bargain with the Congress.

That through the agreement between Dr. Ahmedkar and the orthodox leaders, Gandhi has initiated a great social reform is certainly true. Untouchability is an abomination only possible in a long stagnant agricultural society such as exists in India, a society which by its divisions has helped so powerfully to maintain British rule. But he has achieved this success not on public, but on religious grounds—" for me the matter is one of pure religion." The effect of his fast and its result is therefore to accentuate still further this factor in the Indian scene. It gives fresh life to those ideas which, elsewhere moribund, yet retain so strong a grip on the Indian masses, darkening their minds, destroying their self-respect, and splitting them into a hundred factitious compartments. Whatever its immediate results may be for the depressed classes, it is

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therefore a retrograde step, which it were better had never been made. Not by any zeal of philanthropic effort will the crudities of religion disappear from India; they will vanish only under Socialism before the tractor and the factory machine.

Moreover—and this is vital—Gandhi's action throughout implies acceptance of the imperialist plan. He does not seek to smash the framework of the proposed constitution; on the contrary he works and schemes entirely within that framework with its communal electorates. Thus, like all reformist manœuvres, his exploit serves merely to strengthen the system which in name—and in name only—he has set out to destroy. This is in line with the Delhi pact, his decision to attend the Round Table Conference, and with the aims of the Bombay and Ahmedabad bourgeois, who most emphatically do not want independence. If, then, the Imperialists regret the weakening of their scheme by the elision of an important electorate, they have good grounds for satisfaction in the tightening of religion's grip over India.

The present tactics of Mr. Gandhi are on all fours with his procedure in 1922 when he commenced the civil disobedience movement by the illicit manufacture of salt on the sea-coast. Thereby he sought to divert a mass movement for non-payment of revenue and rent to a minor issue. the evil of the salt tax. So now he seeks to divert the energies of a movement for political and hence mental freedom to a religious issue, to strengthening the very bond that strangles the mind of the masses. Now, as formerly, the whole plan of Mr. Gandhi and his backers is to deflect a revolutionary movement into purely reformist channels. He has expressly disclaimed Socialism, yet Socialism can alone save the masses with their poverty, their starvation and their misery.

It is not necessary to impugn this piety. But, like all religious people, he is vague in thought, shifty in argument, prone to invent spiritual motives for the very material interests that use him as their tool. His speeches and his writings are replete with every sophism known to logic, and probably with others not yet classified. With the deepening of the Indian crisis Mr. Gandhi, like the Socialists and Labourites elsewhere, must inevitably ally himself yet more openly with the landlords and the bourgeoisie and accept Imperialism subject to the modifications they require.

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MARX AND ENGELS ON IRELAND—III.

[We continue this month the third instalment of the Correspondence of Marx and Engels illustrating their attitude on Ireland. The extracts have been made by T. A. Jackson, who has also provided an Introduction and explanatory Notes. The letters printed in this instalment have been specially translated from the German edition of the Correspondence between Marx and Engels now being published by the Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute.]

THE letters in this instalment are of a character to speak for themselves with the minimum of comment. It only needs here to be stated that the central point around which these letters turned was the agitation raised by Marx through the International Working Men's Association in favour of an Amnesty to the Fenian prisoners—who were treated as common felons, and with even more than the usual barbarity meted out to the most brutalised types.

Marx, besides being indignant at this barbarous treatment of political prisoners, saw also that an acquiescence in this iniquity would rivet still closer the ideological and other ties which kept the British workers in political dependence upon the middle class " Liberal " and " Radical " party then in power in the person of Gladstone, the Prime Minister. It was in keeping with this whole outlook that he should seek to use the occasion to the full as a means (*a*) of getting the British workers into action, (*b*) of directing that action towards a complete break with the pseudo " humanitarian " and " progressive " middle class parties and politicians, and (*c*) bringing the British workers and the revolutionary Irish Republicans into practical co-operation against their common enemy—the rulers of Britain.

As a result of Marx's prompting and the energy of the London workers —English and Irish—a highly successful demonstration was held in Hyde Park on the Sunday immediately before the meeting of the Council (referred to in Marx's letter of November 18, 1869) at which Marx opened the discussion on his resolutions.

The upshot of the agitation was that, after the usual evasions, Gladstone was at length compelled to grant the Amnesty demanded.

Moreover with this debate there became apparent that cleavage between Odger, Applegarth and Co.—the chiefs of the " Junta " which had till then all-but-absolutely dominated the trade union, and proletarian-democratic movements—and the revolutionary-radical tendency

[1]For further details see the pamphlet by Ralph Fox: *Marx-Engels-Lenin on the Irish Revolution*. (Modern Books, 3d.).

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championed by Marx, which afterwards found expression in a definitely Socialist movement.

Odger, up to this time, had been popularly regarded as the most advanced type of Democratic Republican possible. He was, in fact, the prototype of the " Atheist Shoemaker " of pious legend. His fame was enshrined in a comic song highly enjoyed in its day in which, along with a string of other unlikely happenings, the singer declaims :

May the Queen have Odger
For a second-floor lodger,
If ever I cease to love !

Tried by the acid test of Marx's resolution denouncing the Government's policy on Ireland Odger and Applegarth were brought squarely in face of the dilemma—to break either with their petty-bourgeois political patrons, or with the militant proletariat and the International. It was characteristic of them, and their like, that they should evade the direct choice thus presented to them. They were " not opposed in principle," but they " had doubts " about the wording, about the expediency of antagonising the " great and good " Gladstone, and so on.

Mottershead, whose material roots were more with the petty-bourgeois Radical " Patriotic " Clubs, and less with the Trade Unions, was more frank. He openly opposed—on " patriotic " grounds.

Marx's prescience was vindicated when some eighteen months later, Odger and Applegarth seized the occasion of the Paris Commune, and the Address thereupon which Marx wrote for and published in the name of the I.W.M.A., to sever their connection finally with that body, and abandon all pretence at being other than petty-bourgeois politicians.

ENGELS TO MARX.

MANCHESTER.
November 17, 1869.

DEAR MOHR,

I am still finding much that is useful on Ireland here, Wolf Tone's memoirs, &c.—that is to say, in the catalogue. As soon as I ask for the books in the library they are not to be found, like the Wakefield. Some old boy or other must have taken out the whole lot together and returned them en masse so that the crowd of them are lying hidden somewhere or other. In any case the things must be found.

The bourgeois thinker and sage is Goldwin Smith, *Irish History and Irish Character*. Ireland is destined by providence to become a grazing land, the prophet, Leonce de Lavergne, has foretold it, ergo pereat (therefore down with) the Irish people !

* * * *

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MARX TO ENGELS.

November 18, 1869.

DEAR FRED,

I am sending you to-day a packet by book-post containing: (1) the Irish volume of pamphlets, Ensor especially of some value; (2) *Social-Democrats* and the *Volksstaat*; and (3) three copies for you, Moore, and Schorlemmer, of the Report of the Basle Congress. I do not know if I have already sent you these. In that case the copies can be distributed to other people.

The *Beehive has entirely suppressed* Eccarius' report of the last session on the *pretext* that it received it too late. The real reason was (1) that it did not want to advertise the fact that the General Council was opening a discussion on the Irish question in the following session; (2) because in the report there was something unacceptable to it (*i.e.*, to Mr. Potter) about the Land and Labour League. Mr. Potter, you must know, stood with a great show as candidate for the committee of that League and has been rejected.

Last Tuesday I opened the discussion on point one: the attitude of the British Ministry to the Irish Amnesty question. I spoke for about an hour-and-a-quarter, *much cheered*, and then proposed the following resolution.

Resolved:

That in his reply to the Irish demands for the release of the imprisoned Irish patriots—a reply contained in his letter to Mr. O'Shea, &c.—Mr. Gladstone deliberately insults the Irish nation;

That he clogs political amnesty with conditions alike degrading to the victims of misgovernment and the people they belong to;

That having, in the teeth of his responsible position, publicly and enthusiastically cheered on the American slaveholders' rebellion, he now steps in to preach to the Irish people the doctrine of passive obedience;

That his whole proceedings with reference to the Irish Amnesty question are the true and genuine offspring of that "policy of conquest," by the fiery denunciation of which Mr. Gladstone ousted his Tory rivals from office;

That the General Council of the International Working Men's Association express their admiration of the spirited, firm and high-souled manner in which the Irish people carry on their amnesty movement;

That these resolutions be communicated to all branches of, and working men's bodies connected with, the International Working Men's Association in Europe and America.

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Harris (O'Brienite) rose to second. But the president (Lucraft) pointed to the clock (we could only stay to eleven); so it was adjourned till next Tuesday. However, Lucroft, Weston, Hales, &c., in fact the whole council declared provisionally their agreement in an informal way.

Another O'Brienite—Milner—said that the wording of the resolution was too feeble (that is to say, not declamatory enough), besides, he wanted all which I had said in justification of it to be included in the resolutions themselves. (A fine story this!)

So there will be a further debate on Tuesday, just time for you to tell me, or rather write what you want changed or inserted in the resolutions. In the last event, if you, for example, still want a paragraph on the amnesty in the whole of Europe, Italy for example, write the thing in the actual form of a resolution.

* * * *

ENGELS TO MARX.

MANCHESTER.
November 19, 1869.

DEAR MOHR,

I hope Eccarius will force Potter to include the thing still, late as it is, just because of the Land and Labour League.

I think that an addition regarding the amnesty in the rest of Europe would only weaken the resolution since, apart from Russia (which, standing alone, would be very good), we would have to exclude Prussia on account of the men sentenced for the Guelph conspiracy. But I would like to polish up the wording a bit: on line 2 I would insert "imprisoned" before the word "victims," or add something to make it clear at a glance who was meant. On line 3 it is a question whether you can talk about "the teeth of a position," and instead of "steps in," I would say "turns round."

Lizzy passed you a vote of thanks for the resolution (carried), and is annoyed that she cannot be there on Tuesday.

* * * *

MARX TO ENGELS.

November 26, 1869.

DEAR FRED,

But now damn Carey! Three cheers for O'Donovan Rossa!

The session last Tuesday was most fiery, warm and violent. Mr. Muddlehead (Mottershead, or what the devil the fellow is called), a Chartist and old friend of Harney's, had brought Odger and Applegarth

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with him as a precaution. On the other side, Weston and Applegarth were missing because they were at an Irish dance. *Reynolds's* had published my resolution in its Saturday issue together with an *abstract* of my speech (as well as Eccarius could do it, he being no stenographer), and *Reynolds's* had banged it right on the front page after his leading article. This seems to have terrified Gladstone's admirers. Hence the appearance of Odger and *a long rambling speech* from Muddershead which Milner (himself an Irishman) struck damn on the head. Applegarth sat beside me and so did not dare to speak *against it*; he spoke rather *for it*, obviously with an uneasy conscience. Odger said that if a division were forced, he must vote for the resolutions. But unanimity would be better and feasible through some slight modifications. Thereupon, since I want to get him right into it, I suggested that he put forward his amendments at the next session! At the last session, although many of our most reliable members were away we could have got the resolution through with only one opposing vote. Tuesday we will be in full force.

* * * *

MARX TO KUGELMANN.

LONDON.
November 29, 1869.

DEAR KUGELMANN,

You probably have seen in the *Volksstaat* the resolution I proposed against Gladstone on the question of the Irish Amnesty. I have now attacked Gladstone—and it has made a sensation here—in exactly the same way as I attacked Palmerston earlier. The demagogic *refugees* here prefer to attack the continental despots from a safe distance. But I don't get any joy in attack except when I'm face to face with the tyrant (vultu instantis tyranni).

Nevertheless, my intervention in this question of the Irish Amnesty, as well as my further resolution at the General Council to discuss the relations of the English working class to Ireland and to frame resolutions on it, naturally had other objects than just to speak loudly and decidedly for the *oppressed* Irish against their *oppressors*.

I have been more and more forced to the conclusion—and it is only a matter of getting this conclusion into the heads of the English working class—that it can never do anything decisive here in England until it divorces its policy in regard to Ireland in the most definite way possible from that of its ruling class and until it not only makes a united front with the Irish but even takes the initiative in the dissolution of the Union imposed in 1801 and replaces it by a federal relation. And, moreover, this must be done not as a matter of sympathy with Ireland but as a

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demand based upon the interests of the English working class itself. If not, the English people remain in the leading strings of the ruling class, because it is necessarily making a united front with it against Ireland. Every one of its movements in England itself will still be hampered by the quarrel with Ireland and the Irish, who in England itself form a very considerable portion of the working class. The *first condition* of emancipation here—the fall of the English propertied oligarchy—remains impossible of fulfilment, since their positions here cannot be stormed so long as they still control their strongly-entrenched outposts in Ireland. But over there, as soon as the matter is placed in the hands of the Irish people themselves, as soon as they have to deal with their own law-givers and rulers, as soon as Ireland is autonomous, then the destruction of the landed aristocracy (to a great extent the same individuals as the English landlords) is incomparably easier there than here, because, in Ireland, it is not only a simple economic question but at the same time a *national* question, because the landlords there are not as in England the traditional dignitaries and representatives but the mortally detested oppressors of the nation. Not only is the internal development of England paralysed by its present attitude towards Ireland, but also its external policy, especially in relation to Russia and the U.S.A.

Then if the English working class unconditionally throws altogether its decisive weight into the scales of social emancipation, then here is the lever ready to its hand. In actual fact the English republic under Cromwell was wrecked on—Ireland. Once bitten, twice shy ! (non bis in idem !). The Irish have played the British Government a splendid trick by their election of a *convict-felon*, O'Donovan Rossa, as member of parliament. The government newspapers immediately threatened another suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act, a " renewed reign of terror," &c. As a matter of fact, England *has never ruled Ireland in any other way and cannot rule it in any other way* so long as the present Union persists except by the most hideous reign of terror and the most revolting corruption.

* * * *

NOTES.

WAKEFIELD—" An Account of Ireland, Statistical and Political." By Edward Wakefield. 2 vols. London. 1812.

DE LAVERGNE, Leonce Guilhard (1809-80)—Orleanist politician and economist.

THE BEEHIVE—1862-1876, a Journal of Trade Union and Democratic politics edited by George Potter, one time secretary of the London Bricklayers' Union.

O'BRIENITE—A follower of William Smith O'Brien (1803-1864), the aristocratic republican who led (and totally ruined) the Irish rising of 1848. He was never more than mildly tinged with Mazzinian humanitarian-democracy, and after the '48 period figured more as a romantic memory than a figure of importance. At the date mentioned his memory (and his " gentlemanliness ") was used as a counterpoise to the most militant Fenianism.

LIZZY—Engel's wife, Elizabeth Byrne, an Irishwoman.

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APPLEGARTH, Robert (1833-1923)—Secretary of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners; was with Odger and Allan (A.S.E.), one of the leaders of the dominating group of Trade Union officials whom the Webbs' called the " Junta "—but who were in their day just as often called " the Clique " or " the Dirty Pack." In 1864 the agitation for the franchise being at its height, the radicalism of the workers having been excited by the American Civil War and its reactions upon Britain (as well as by Fenianism), and the Trade Unions themselves being threatened with suppression,—because of all these things the " Junta " were glad to lend countenance to the I.W.M.A., and serve on its General Council. By the end of 1869 all these causes of impulsion having lapsed with the extension of the franchise, they were reverting to the more congenial line of development of petty-bourgeois Parliamentary wangling.

DAMN CAREY !—The previous portion of the letter discusses an American economist of that name.

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BOOK REVIEW

A DOCTOR WHO DOES NOT DIAGNOSE.

Hungry England. By A. Fenner Brockway. (Gollancz.) 2s. 6d.

GREAT Britain to-day is a land of privation, want and misery for the majority of its population, for the toiling people. The hungry 'forties find their echo now in the hungry 'thirties. Mr. Brockway has toured the country and he pictures the main industrial areas in this book. It is a black and terrible picture. But it is not, as Mr. Brockway paints it, a true picture. For it does not show the misery of the masses as part of a social process, as the accompaniment of a particular system of class relationships; and it does not show the rising wave of working class revolt which alone can alter this system and thereby banish misery and want for ever.

Merely to describe the horrors of working class life is not a new or a revolutionary thing. Liberal newspapers have often done it (the *Manchester Guardian*, by the way, made a good feature story from Mr. Brockway's book). And all the motley "social service" crew, the Church organisations, the charity-mongers, the slummers and the Housing Association ladies and gentlemen, do it with great emphasis and fervour. Anyone who cares to make a collection of the fairly voluminous literature put forth by these people will find they have in their hands a pretty faithful replica of Mr. Brockway's book.

Mr. Brockway is careful not to present the many workers whom he interviews as people with any political views at all, even of the most elementary character: they are "crushed in spirit" or "settling down to it"—the typical Labour Party-I.L.P. slander that the workers are "apathetic."

Just like his blood-brother, the slumming curate, the leader of the Independent Labour Party, incurable petty-bourgeois that he is, approaches the working class from outside; and his acute sensibility and highly-strung nerves suffer very much. Oh, how "I hate this job I am on: enquiring into other people's misery" cries the Reverend Brockway, with a sanctimonious roll of the eyes heaven-ward: "I find it difficult to continue my investigation," he exclaims: his eyes are offended by an unemployed queue at Jarrow—"I do not like looking at them," he says, but he is impressed by the Exchange manager, who is "the best type of Civil Servant, sympathetic and able": the relation of a hard case disturbs him so exceedingly that "I want to go without hearing the finish"; in another hard case "all I *can* do" is to "wish them better luck." After a morning in the slums of Glasgow, lunch comes as a welcome relief, "and I am glad to get a wash, for I feel dirty and itchy."

In all this Mr. Brockway is following out the authentic Liberal tradition of the I.L.P. leadership, and incidentally, revealing just how unreal, for that leadership, was the "revolutionary" turn at Bradford. The concluding paragraph of the book damns the author, and the whole political outlook he represents, out of his own mouth. "My purpose," he admits, "has been to describe and not to diagnose." A doctor who said that would be confessing his own bankruptcy. And in those words the leader of the I.L.P. confesses the bankruptcy of himself and his Party. Without diagnosis of the social ills of England to-day it is self-evident that there can be no cure.

P.G.B.

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